On March 12, 2013, CIRS organized a panel on the topic: “War by Other Means? Iran under Sanctions,” featuring Mehran Kamrava, Director of CIRS; Mansoor Moaddel, CIRS Visiting Scholar; and Manata Hashemi, CIRS Post-Doctoral Fellow. The objective of the panel was to have a discussion on the nature of the sanctions and their consequences for both the Iranian individual and the state.

Mehran Kamrava began the discussion with a summary of the history of the sanctions imposed on Iran, as well as their effects on the lives of ordinary Iranians. He recounted that the sanctions were imposed on Iran by the United States and other Western governments in reaction to the U.S. embassy hostage incident in 1979, and as a means of isolating the Islamic Republic in the subsequent years. It was only twenty years later, however, that the Clinton Administration passed the “Iran Sanctions Act,” which made the sanctions regime an integral part of U.S. foreign policy. The strict sanctions were used as a means to ensure that Iran’s nuclear program did not progress due to import and export embargoes. “The assumption was that once Iran stops enriching its nuclear capabilities, then the sanctions would be lifted,” he maintained.

In later years, while the Bush Administration threatened Iran with the possibility of war, the Obama Administration reacted to the Islamic Republic by increasing sanctions that constricted Iran even further. “It is the Obama Administration that has been far more aggressive in terms of the sanctions regime,” Kamrava argued, because President Obama has been trying to keep the Republicans at bay by adhering to congressional means of engagement instead of threatening to attack or invade Iran. The problem with comprehensive and encompassing sanctions is that they do not always differentiate between civilian and military needs, Kamrava explained. The sanctions imposed on Iran rarely target only the state as these restrictive measures have devastating effects on the civilian population.

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Greetings from Doha.
Over the past few months, CIRS has engaged on a number of research initiatives, produced several English and Arabic-language publications, and connected to the Doha community through a robust public affairs programming effort, including Monthly Dialogue lectures, Focused Discussions, as well as a Distinguished Lecture series.

We are especially pleased to announce the publication of the Arabic version of “Food Security and Food Sovereignty in the Middle East,” which is the result of a two-year research initiative on the topic and is, to date, the most comprehensive study on food security in the Middle East. In addition, CIRS has recently released several new publications, including Summary Reports on “The Evolving Ruling Bargain in the Middle East” and “GCC States’ Land Investments Abroad: The Case of Ethiopia.” These publications contain synopses of papers delivered at the various working group meetings that we held at the Georgetown University in Qatar campus, as well as the results of original fieldwork research. We have also just published a new Occasional Paper on “Religious Democracy and Civilizational Politics: Comparing Political Islam and Political Catholicism” authored by Michael Driessen, a former CIRS Post-Doctoral Fellow. These publications can all be downloaded for free from the CIRS website. For more information on our most recent publications, refer to page 3 of this newsletter.

In terms of CIRS research and scholarship efforts, we have been busy on a number of fronts and have been engaged in several ongoing and overlapping projects, including commencing two new projects to study “Arab Migrant Communities in the GCC” and “The State and Innovation in the Gulf.” These initiatives are designed to explore these topics through empirically-grounded, theoretically informed research where the goal is to fill in existing gaps in the literature and to contribute original knowledge to the field.

This newsletter contains detailed information about each CIRS activity and research initiative conducted over the past semester, and we warmly welcome feedback from our readership, whether it is through Facebook, Twitter, or by e-mail. I, and the rest of the CIRS team, look forward to hearing from you and seeing you at our upcoming lectures. Finally, you may also keep abreast of CIRS news by logging on to the CIRS website at: http://cirs.georgetown.edu.

Sincerely,

Mehran Kamrava
Professor
Director of CIRS
Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar

ABOUT CIRS

The Center for International and Regional Studies at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar is guided by the principles of academic excellence, forward vision, and community engagement.

The CIRS mission revolves around five principal goals:
• To provide a forum for scholarship and research on international and regional affairs;
• To encourage in-depth examination and exchange of ideas;
• To foster thoughtful dialogue among students, scholars, and practitioners of international affairs;
• To facilitate the free flow of ideas and knowledge through publishing the products of its research, sponsoring conferences and seminars, and holding workshops designed to explore the complexities of the twenty-first century;
• To engage in outreach activities with a wide range of local, regional, and international partners.
**Food Security in the Middle East**

**ARABIC SUMMARY REPORT**

“The Evolving Ruling Bargain in the Middle East” Summary Report details the CIRS research initiative on “The Evolving Ruling Bargain in the Middle East,” which scrutinizes the ways in which domestic political arrangements in the Middle East are evolving, and how the authoritarian bargains are being challenged in Arab countries. This initiative brings together distinguished scholars to examine a variety of relevant topics and to contribute original chapters to the CIRS book titled, Beyond the Arab Spring: The Evolving Ruling Bargain in the Middle East.

Topics addressed in the research include: the need for modifying theoretical paradigms explaining authoritarian perseverance in the Middle East; the role of key actors and institutions (the role of the military, the bureaucracy, the ruling party, and opposition figures); evolving sources of political legitimacy; the dynamics of the domestic and international political economy, and the impact of the failure (or the efforts) to reform domestic economies; the relevance or not of Political Islam and the role of Islamism in the opposition; and the role of traditional media, new media, and social media.

**Religious Democracy and Civilizational Politics:** Comparing Political Islam and Political Catholicism

**BY MICHAEL DRIJESSEN**

This paper qualifies the historical, institutional, and theological similarities of political Islam and political Catholicism. In doing so, it emphasizes the importance of the legacies of Catholic Christendom and Muslim Dar al-Islam as transnational, pre-Westphalian religious political orders and the idea of religious authority found in either. After articulating these bases of comparison, the paper considers how these religious legacies remain present in the transition to Christian or Muslim Democracies by exploring the rhetoric of Catholic civilization or Muslim civilization found in Pope Pius XII and Rachid Ghannouchi’s discourses on democracy.

**GCC States’ Land Investments Abroad: The Case of Ethiopia**

**SUMMARY REPORT**

With the help of a CIRS grant, Benjamin Shepherd from the University of Sydney, uses data generated from months of fieldwork in Ethiopia to evaluate the country as a potential long-term source of agricultural staples for Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states as part of their national food security strategies. Part of a larger CIRS research initiative on “Food Security and Food Sovereignty in the Middle East,” this report identifies the risks as well as the opportunities of foreign investment in the agricultural sector of Ethiopia. Shepherd makes some recommendations in this report for further research, and for GCC state policy-makers to re-think national food security policies.
CIRS held a second working group meeting to conclude its research initiative on “Social Change in Post-Khomeini Iran” on March 16-17, 2013. Experts and scholars from various multidisciplinary backgrounds reconvened in Doha to discuss their research findings. They also garnered feedback on their individual papers based on original areas of research that were discussed in the first working group meeting.

The scholars began the discussion by problematizing conventional theories of territorial nationalism and assessing the evolving dynamics of nationalism within the Islamic Republic. The infusion of national identity and religion in weaving national consciousness has been used by various leaders in the post-Khomeini era to develop particular ideologies amongst their constituents and mobilize support for their respective policies. However, elements of national identity and religiosity in conceiving nationalism do not manifest themselves uniformly across Iran and may differ according to overlapping identity formations such as socioeconomic status and ethnicity.

While discussing the theory and practice of human rights in Iran, the participants addressed the increasing politicization of rights terminology. In the wake of the 2009 Green Movement, protesters were indicted on the basis of using human rights discourse to further their cause. More recently, political leaders have bestowed a veneer of legitimacy to the term “basic rights” to counteract the seemingly uniform form and content of music, which progressively no longer needs to be defined along Islamic themes. This shift has also been accompanied by an evolution in the constraints in the Iranian public scene due to the pre-revolutionary, Westernized connotations associated with the genre. In contemporary Iran, there has been a gradual revival and state-sanctioning of pop-music. Indigenous pop-music and Iranian films were also discussed by the contributors. While the post-revolutionary government regarded music with particular attention to the rights of women in Iran. The depiction of women as agents of social rehabilitation by religious leaders in the Islamic Republic has manifested itself in the disproportionate penalties for women in criminal law. Changes to the laws of *hudud* and *qisas*, which incorporate elements of gender disparity, reveal the state’s efforts to morally sanction women in Iran. While these laws may be reflective of the state’s central policy, the Islamic Republic’s hybrid legal system and clerical judicial structure complicates the matter of localized implementation. Current public debates on the disproportionate *diya*, and the ensuing advocacy by some legal scholars and leading ‘Ulama alike for the equal compensation of women reflects a broader change within Iranian society, where a woman’s contribution and worth to her family is considered to be equivalent to that of a man.

The change of women’s status in society is central to the transformation of the Iranian family in the post-Khomeini era. The demographic transition of Iran indicates that declining fertility rates are associated with increased investment in children’s education. As such, a rise in schooling has narrowed the gender education gap and transformed the average Iranian family into a less constrained, pro-growth family, where the improved bargaining position of women within the household is accompanied with augmented investment in human capital. While on average women in urban Iran tend to be more educated than their male counterparts, the most dramatic family transformations have taken place in rural Iran.

As gender relations are being negotiated in the household, women writers have also progressively revisited the Iranian family structure in their literary works. Notions of women’s single commitment to motherhood are questioned, and issues such as adoption are being addressed in Iranian literary works for the first time. A central theme in women’s literature is the issue of space and mobility, where women perceive themselves to be prisoners of sex-segregated spaces. The range of issues that both explicitly and subtly question the state’s uni-dimensional vision of women as vanguards of the moral public order are not only pursued by elite Iranian women as was the case in the pre-revolution period, but have increasingly been produced and consumed by women of various ideological and socio-economic backgrounds in the contemporary period.

Transformations in other forms of cultural production such as indigenous pop-music and Iranian films were also discussed by the contributors. While the post-revolutionary government regarded music as one of the most contested art-forms, pop-music faced heightened constraints in the Iranian public scene due to the pre-revolutionary, Westernized connotations associated with the genre. In contemporary Iran, there has been a gradual revival and state-sanctioning of pop-music. This shift has also been accompanied by an evolution in the form and content of music, which progressively no longer needs to be heavily defined along Islamic themes.
Sheikha Aisha bint Faleh Al Thani delivered a
Monthly Dialogue lecture on “Women in Qatar: Quotas, Qualifications, and Qatarization” on December 4, 2012. Al Thani is the chairperson and founder of Al Faleh Group, an organization that provides educational products and services, and she also serves on the Board of Directors for the Supreme Education Council, Reach Out to Asia, and the Zaytuna Institute and College.

Al Thani began by noting that “despite great strides in education and employment, a large gender gap remains in position of status in Qatar for women.” There is still much work to be done to close the gender gap in the labor market, especially in relation to the integration of Qatari women on a level playing field in the workforce, she argued.

Education is one of the key pillars of His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani’s 2030 Vision for Qatar, and one of the greatest agents of change for the role of women. “Qatar has become a regional leader in education,” and has invested in reforming the educational system. In addition, some of the world’s leading universities and educational institutions have been invited to impart quality education and transfer knowledge and skills. Through the emphasis on reforming educational policies, Qatari women are emerging as professionals who contribute equally to the country’s sustainable growth in a knowledge-based economy.

“There is a strong positive correlation between employability and the quality of education a woman receives,” and so women in Qatar have been increasingly and actively participating in the economy, the labor market, and society. Thus, Qatari women are shattering old paradigms, the Sheikha said.

In comparison to the neighboring GCC states, Qatar has the highest percentage of local women employed in the national labor market. Despite this positive statistic, Qatar has the region’s lowest percentage of women in senior roles, and trails behind the European average. “United Nations data showed that only seven percent of people in senior and managerial positions were women, which was the lowest in the region.” This means that “women are still underrepresented in decision-making positions in many fields,” but, Al Thani argued, this is changing in Qatar as more educated women are continually changing the face of the labor market.

Although education is one of the most powerful tools for the empowerment of women in society, it is only one area of social, economic, and political participation. Qatar has positively introduced gender quotas in national employment, but, the Sheikha argued, there is a risk that these are not properly introduced. There still needs to be more done to tackle the careful implementation of “Qatarization” and gender quota policies for the inclusion of women in the labor market. “Because this lack of participation is holding the region back from further economic growth, some governments have stiffened their resolve to ensure that unrealistic quotas are met,” she argued. “Not surprisingly, many public and private sector managers are reluctant to hire and retain nationals, especially women, whom they feel lack the skills needed for the job.”

Qatarization and gender quotas must be introduced in a careful manner so that all stakeholders gain from women’s participation in the labor market. The Sheikha gave the example of Qatar Petroleum as a company that has addressed Qatarization in a strategic and systematic way. “It has adopted a process for attracting qualified talent from all available sources. This includes hiring entry level candidates directly from the ranks of recent graduates from women’s colleges and vocational institutes,” she said.

Such job placement programs and public-private partnerships providing a direct link between educational institutions and the labor market is a must for the future of Qatar. The connection between education and the labor market cannot be stressed enough, the Sheikha said, as one necessarily eases the burden on the other. Educated graduates will need less training from their employers and this will lead to a smooth and symbiotic relationship between the two spheres.

In conclusion, the Sheikha offered recommendations for the effective application of Qatarization policies to address the gender imbalance in the labor market. “Introducing a quota system for women will not be easy, and there is a risk of moving too fast, even for those companies that are most aggressively tackling Qatarization.” Qatar should implement a policy that takes into account practical skills such as professional development and entrepreneurship programs to help women become innovators. The transfer of knowledge and acquiring job skills are long and arduous processes that need time to take shape. Educational reform has occurred relatively recently and so not enough time has passed to assess the success of these campaigns. “For reforms to be effective, evaluation of policies must become an essential component of the process of monitoring so that initiatives can be revised and improved based on measured outcomes,” she explained.

“There is a strong positive correlation between employability and the quality of education a woman receives.”

Although women in Qatar play a huge role in community development, raising awareness about the possibilities of contributing to the country’s economy is important. Sheikha Moza bin Nasser and her daughter Sheikha Al Mayassa are great role models for Qatar, the region, and the world.
CIRS and the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs held a panel discussion on “Who or What Drives Climate Change Policy in the Arab World?” on December 3, 2012. The panel featured Roula Majdalani from the United Nation’s Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; Lama El Hatow from IndyACT-The League of Independent Activists; and Rabi Mohtar from the Qatar Energy and Environment Research Institute (QEERI). Karim Makdisi from the American University of Beirut moderated the panel.

The first speaker, Roula Majdalani, advocated for the state as the most important player in any climate change related issue. However, Majdalani said, it is necessary to question who or what the state represents, especially in the context of the Arab uprisings and “the dismantling of the security apparatus.” The dissolution of regional regimes does not mean that the state per se has disappeared, but that there are new dynamics taking shape at the level of governance. The state, Majdalani said, plays a strategic role in its “ability for working through complex governance structures, working at an inter-ministerial level, working with a long range perspective, and working on issues that are transboundary, and, in that sense, the state really is a key interlocutor in this process of negotiation.” It is also the main player in mobilizing financing and the transfer of technology on international and domestic levels.

The state has the main responsibility to address extreme climactic conditions such as droughts and floods, she said. Thus, it is in the state’s interest to lead climate change policy, especially in the countries of the Arab World where issues of water and energy are paramount. The state is also responsible for safeguarding, preserving, and exploiting natural resources without adversely affecting neighboring countries. Carbon emissions are necessarily transboundary, and so the state must negotiate with its neighbors and, indeed, with the international community for international climate related agreements. Majdalani argued that the increasing interest in issues of climate change among Arab nations provides a unique opportunity to reinvent the idea of the state as an entity that is accountable, transparent, and responsible. Traditionally, some Arab states have been strong in terms of forcefulness and authoritarianism, but weak when it comes to the will and capacity to tackle such irreversible environmental issues.

Rabi Mohtar was the second speaker who highlighted the role of science in addressing climate change. He argued that current climate change data states that “the extremes in terms of climate are getting hotter, but that doesn’t tell us where and how.” Further complicating the discourse, the scientific knowledge on climate change is still in a nascent phase and much of the data is contradictory and inaccurate. Mohtar argued that there is urgent need to invest in research and development. QEERI, he said, is taking the lead on many such research initiatives in the region and “embarking on an initial study that looks into the effects of climate change on dust and dust storms.”

It is befitting that Qatar hosted the COP 18 conference, Mohtar said, since the Arab World is most affected by increased population growth and concomitant stresses on food, water, and energy. The Middle East “is where the highest per capita consumption of water and energy is taking place” and where food security is a real concern. “There is no single country in the whole region that is self–sufficient,” in terms of food, and so “the food–water nexus is an extreme driver for climate change research that we should be focusing on.” This includes investigating efforts to reintroduce dry land agriculture that had been traditionally used in the countries of the Middle East since ancient times. Mohtar conclude by saying that there is a need for a climate change model that is locally developed for the characteristics of the region.

The final speaker, Lama El Hatow, rallied for the importance of civil society in climate change issues and argued for “the role that civil society can also play by affecting and influencing climate change policy in this part of the world.” She explained that civil society in many countries of Arab World has been either dormant or non-existent due to “the oppressive nature of many Arab governments and the way that many social structures function.” Since the regional uprisings, this scene has changed dramatically, and a space has opened up for civil society organizations to operate openly and effectively. These new formations are increasingly made up of youth groups who advocate for a variety of issues, including human rights.

Since climate change issues are transboundary and of global concern, Arab civil society organizations are teaming up with their international counterparts and pressing their governments on unified issues. Although many of these groups have limited capacity, their passion for the issues has made a significant difference. As a final thought, El Hatow said that although many regional and international governments have made great strides in addressing issues of climate change, civil society organizations are still needed as they act as a monitoring force and a constant voice that prompts governments into further action.
CIRS convened a working group meeting to research “Weak States in the Greater Middle East” on December 8-9, 2012. Participants employed a multi-disciplinary approach to critically analyze the terminology of weak and failing states, and the political implications associated with states being characterized as such. In addition to exploring cross-cutting themes on the global weak states discourse, individual case studies of Middle Eastern countries were discussed to highlight the range of domestic, regional, and global causes and consequences of state fragility.

The participants began with a discussion of the notions and terminologies of state failure and weakness. Through the lens of standardized classifications of states and their capacity, weak states are defined as those that are considered to lack certain distinct qualities and the ability to provide adequate social, economic, and political goods to their citizenry. These rankings are utilized by policy-makers to assess states and to accordingly develop policies that promote economic development, provide, humanitarian assistance, and support political stability. The various methodologies used to construct indexes, and the ability to meaningfully interpret the rankings was questioned during the meeting. The aggregation of a diverse set of states, based on indicators that highlight certain symptoms without taking into account the causes and dynamisms of certain conditions on the ground, offers a monolithic conception of states’ successes and failures.

This classification of states has directed the focus of donor countries and multilateral organizations to those states that are ranked at the bottom end of the state strength continuum. When assessing the effectiveness of aid allocation in weak states, the participants debated the various routes of aid delivery, the strategic interests of donor states, and the different types of aid provided. In some cases, aid allocation fulfills the purpose of paying off elites for the strategic interest of the donor countries, while in other cases development institutions are created outside of the recipient state in order to achieve short-term results, consequently undermining the state and exacerbating the original problem of capacity weakness.

The politicization of aid converges with the securitization of the weak state discourse. It is assumed that state weakness creates a permissive environment for non-state actors to thrive, thereby posing a non-traditional threat to global security. Policy-makers believe that there is a positive quadratic relationship between non-traditional threat production and state failure or collapse. However, more recent scholarly work suggests that a collapsed state does not have adequate financial and logistical resources to fund criminal or terrorist networks, while weak states do. It was suggested by some of the working group participants that the monolithic designation of weak states does not enable policy-makers to understand the particular threat posed or to tailor an effective solution.

The Arab Spring has unmasked the fragility of states ruled by authoritarian governments. The working group participants provided illumination on several states in the Middle East post the uprisings, both in terms of their domestic functioning and their regional interaction. Libya’s Qaddafi was characterized by his personalistic and idiosyncratic rule of a state that lacked institutions. In the aftermath of Qaddafi’s fall, some have argued that this lack of institutions is a blessing in disguise, since the Libyan state is not weighed down by the previous regime’s judiciary and military-industry complex. The participants also discussed the security status of the post-revolutionary Libyan state with regards to militias, and the consequent spillover effect of arms entering neighboring countries. In the context of external intervention and its impact on state weakness, the case of Iraq was examined. Urban politics and post-war reconstruction in Iraq demonstrated that cities function as both the loci of armed conflict and the main sites of state-building.

Indexes that quantify the state’s policies and institutional performance and grade them against weakness and strength, do not offer a tool to understand the nuances of regime adaptability in the state. A monolithic conception of states fails to understand countries such as Sudan where there are dynamic actors who bargain in a political marketplace. Over the last decade, Sudanese political life has degenerated from one with an institutionalized core, to a regionalized political marketplace driven by an auction of allegiance. Characterized as an oligarchy, the ruling elite have been able to contend with competing local and regional centers of patronage in order to maintain central power and keep the periphery of the state from seriously threatening the regime. An increased focus on specific relationships, namely the disconnect between state and society, is necessary in examining the question of center and margin in weak states.

The participants debated whether states that are in the process of formation rather than political consolidation should be considered weak states. The Yemeni state, which is consistently labeled as weak or collapsing, is still in a state-building process where political negotiation continues to unfold. Characterized as a state with diffuse systems of localized authority, legal pluralism, and rife with weaponry, the Yemeni state falls short of the Weberian ideal of statehood. On the issue of weaponry, it was discussed that in Yemen, violence is a symbolic resource and not one that is utilized in ruthless fashion. Moreover, some argue that it is

“Weak States in the Greater Middle East” working group members during the meeting.

Continued on page 12
H.E. Munir Ghannam, Ambassador of Palestine in Qatar, delivered a Focused Discussion lecture on February 13, 2013, on the topic of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Ambassador introduced the lecture by noting that “the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which is part of the Arab-Israeli conflict,” has a long and turbulent history that has been ongoing for over a century. Giving some historical background to the conflict, the Ambassador recounted that “the whole story started at the beginning of twentieth century when Palestine was put under the British mandate in 1922, which then started a process of allowing hundreds of thousands of Jewish immigrants to immigrate from several countries all over the world, but mainly from Europe,” because of the atrocities that the Jews had been subjected to in general, and during the world wars in particular.

Over the course of the twentieth century, what was once known as Palestine was completely altered. Through a series of concerted Israeli political and military efforts, Palestine was annexed, occupied, and transformed into an illegitimate entity. Much of the land was renamed as Israel. “At the beginning of the twentieth century,” Ambassador Ghannam explained, “the population of Palestine was 89 percent Arabs—I mean, Arabs who are Muslims and Christians—and 11 percent were Jews also living in Palestine and considered Palestinian.” By 1947, the ratios were radically changed causing much friction and a series of conflicts, which spilled into neighboring countries, and ignited an ongoing armed Palestinian resistance campaign. Currently, the Israelis have introduced such dramatic shifts in the demography and geography of the area that they have in effect changed the reality on the ground.

After several rounds of failed negotiations over the years, the Palestinians found that there was no way to reach an agreement with the Israelis to establish a viable contiguous Palestinian state in the West Bank because of Israel’s constant absorption, confiscation, and annexation of land in the West Bank and Gaza. “Whenever we reach an agreement, we find new realities on the ground that don’t allow us to establish a state, and that is why a couple of years ago, we stopped negotiations with the Israelis and we started trying to seek a solution at the United Nations and the Security Council where we managed to have the status of an observer state,” he said.

“We stopped negotiations with the Israelis and we started trying to seek a solution at the United Nations and the Security Council.”

In conclusion, Ambassador Ghannam said that this new situation gives hope to the Palestinians that a fresh round of negotiations can now take place with the support of the international community to give the “two-state solution” international legitimacy and to eventually lead to a sovereign and unoccupied Palestinian state.

Focused Discussion

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA ON THE SYRIAN CONFLICT

The Center for International and Regional Studies hosted a Focused Discussion featuring the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dr. Zlatko Lagumdžija on March 10, 2013. The event included an in-depth discussion of the Syrian conflict with senior diplomats and ambassadors, academics, and foreign policy analysts.

Some of the topics that Dr. Lagumdžija discussed included the course and direction of the ongoing Syrian conflict; the regional and international responses it has elicited; the pros and cons of foreign military intervention in the conflict; and the rise in the scale of the refugees and the humanitarian disaster to which the conflict has given rise.
Former Foreign Minister of Thailand and career diplomat Kasit Piromya was the featured speaker for a *Monthly Dialogue* on January 22, 2013. H. E. Piromya’s talk, titled “Southeast Asia’s Role in Global Food Security,” focused on the role of Southeast Asian countries as major exporters of food and as the “food cradle” or “food kitchen” of the world. Southeast Asian countries rank among the top global food producers and exporters. “There is no food shortage and there is no famine in Southeast Asia, so we feel confident that we can be the supplier of food for the decades to come,” he said.

Addressing the important connections between Southeast Asian countries and the Gulf Cooperation Council states, Piromya pointed to the potential to create long-lasting cooperative agreements between the two sides. He noted that Gulf states are secure in oil, gas, and energy, whilst Southeast Asian countries enjoy food security. This presents optimum grounds for partnerships and working together to achieve common goals and mutually beneficial arrangements where one part of the world has particular resources that can be of benefit to other areas of the globe. “The first thing that comes to mind,” Piromya claimed, “is the complementarity of Southeast Asia and the Gulf states.”

Despite this natural partnership between Southeast Asian countries and the Gulf states, questions remain regarding how this complementarity between food security and energy security cooperation can be achieved. Piromya offered several possible scenarios for cross-regional cooperation.

The first, he said, is for the trading partners to establish and agree upon long-term contracts to trade food and energy resources. Another option is for Gulf states to enter into joint venture agreements with existing Southeast Asian organizations to actively invest in farms and related activities in Southeast Asian countries. This scenario will allow Gulf investors to work directly with food production experts in order to increase productivity and returns on investment. A final suggestion is to create stockpiles of food that can be kept in storage and utilized as and when needed. He said that “Thailand, as a major food exporting country, pledged 50,000 tons of rice into the stockpile for emergency situations.” These stockpiles can be stored on land or in the form of “floating stockpiles” on ships that are directed towards areas of need anywhere in the world. This option requires that countries maintain emergency stockpiles ready to deploy in disaster situations and that countries work in conjunction with international organizations like the World Food Programme to deliver food aid to countries in need. For example, “when there was an earthquake in Haiti a few years back, Thailand was the biggest contributor in terms of humanitarian assistance; we provided the largest amount of rice,” he said.

“Qatar will take the future in its own hands, manage the wealth all over the world, and manage itself also as an open society.”

Countries in Southeast Asia and the Gulf could work together to tackle some of the more prescient global food security issues. In his former capacity as Foreign Minister, Piromya was directly involved in negotiations with the World Food Programme to provide food aid, especially rice, in times of crisis in the Asia Pacific region and on the east coast of Africa. Similarly, “the Gulf states, with so much financial endowments, could also play a very important role in terms of humanitarian assistance,” he said. To this end, it is imperative that ASEAN countries and GCC state leaders establish a more consistent political dialogue between the two regions. Taking this regional cooperation a step further, Piromya argued for the necessity to go beyond food aid and to think of partnerships that can be maintained at the level of research and development. He concluded by saying that there is great interest in researching and investing in alternative and renewable energy sources in many Southeast Asian and Gulf states. Currently, in Thailand, alternative energy is being produced from food sources such as tapioca, palm oil, and molasses. This is a mutually beneficial area for both regions to work closely together.

Earlier in the day, Piromya met with Georgetown University SFS-Qatar students to share his experiences as a career diplomat and relayed various anecdotes about his forty years in the Thai Foreign Service. Later in the day, he spoke to various ambassadors and embassy staff stationed in Qatar at a lunch talk organized by CIRS. During the meeting, he discussed his optimism for Qatar’s future in light of the Arab Spring, globalization, and increased liberalization. With the inevitable depletion of natural resources, he argued that Qatar has invested wisely in its future knowledge-based economy: “Qatar will take the future in its own hands, manage the wealth all over the world, and manage itself also as an open society.” As a final thought, Piromya said that Qatar has taken and will continue to take a leading role in many global issues ranging from sports to climate change.

Kasit Piromya previously served as Thailand’s ambassador to Russia, Indonesia, Germany, Japan, and the United States. From 2008 to 2011, he was Thailand’s Minister of Foreign Affairs. Currently, H. E. Piromya is a member of the Thai Parliament representing the Democrat Party.
Richard Schofield, an expert on the study of historical territorial disputes, delivered a CIRS Monthly Dialogue lecture on the subject of “Territorializing when Decolonizing: Britain Tries to Square its Circles in the Gulf, 1968–1971” on February 5, 2013. Schofield, who is Convenor of the Master’s programme in Geopolitics, Territory, and Security at King’s College in London, examined the period of the late 1960s and early 1970s when Britain announced its plans to leave the Gulf and end the regional Pax Britannica. During this time, there were several territorial issues and ongoing disputes that Britain needed to confront before its departure. “In the late 1960s, Britain was faced with a whole set of territorial issues between protected states, and between protected states and their neighbors,” Schofield said.

Schofield examined numerous recently released British foreign office documents in order to highlight a set of disputes that were ongoing in the 1960s. These included northern Gulf worries that continued on from the 1930s posed by Kuwait and its boundary dispute with Iraq, and, in particular, the intersection of boundaries and territorial claims between Abu Dhabi, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar in relation to the access corridor of Khor Al-Udaid.

Before its departure, Britain actively encouraged Gulf leaders to increase cooperation with each other and attempted to contribute towards a future grouping of Arab states on the western side of the Gulf in what was termed “Gulfery.” In order to achieve some movement on these territorial issues, the United States proposed solving several disputes simultaneously as a package in order to address many issues at once. This included proposing to the Shah that Iran drop its claim to Bahrain, that Britain help Iran gain ownership of islands in the lower Gulf, and that a maritime boundary agreement be signed between Saudi Arabia and Iran, allowing oil companies in to develop the area. “One of the things that was really troubling the States around this time was the failure of Saudi Arabia and Iran to finalize a boundary agreement so that they could open up the hydrocarbon reserves of the northern Gulf,” Schofield explained. Towards the end of the 1960s, however, these deals rapidly unraveled and became unfeasible.

One particular case-study that Schofield examined was what he termed the “bizarre” boundary agreement signed between Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi in 1974. The only way to make sense of this agreement, according to Schofield, is to delve into the complex history of the dispute. “The agreement of ’74 was bizarre […] for the way in which it dealt with both offshore and onshore boundary definitions,” because even though most of the territory lay within the Abu Dhabi boundary, the agreement read that all hydrocarbons in the area would be considered as belonging to Saudi Arabia. Similarly, the offshore agreement read that Saudi Arabia could mount military installations on some of the islands said to belong to Abu Dhabi.

“We move to a rather nonsensical position where the southern Qatari land boundary was seen as a Saudi concern, yet its southeastern maritime limits a British one.”

Adding to the complexity of the agreement, the onshore boundaries and the offshore boundaries were negotiated at different times and with different results. Schofield said that “it was an unusual and messy situation—you don’t see it replicated anywhere else.” At a time when Britain was taking less responsibility for protected states’ foreign relations, many of these territorial contracts were being signed without the consent of Britain, and sometimes without Britain even having any knowledge of these agreements. “We move to a rather nonsensical position where the southern Qatari land boundary was seen as a Saudi concern, yet its southeastern maritime limits a British one,” Schofield said.

In conclusion, Schofield argued that territorial boundaries in the Gulf were traditionally drawn up according to “cultural and historical” agreements. Historically, Gulf states exercised control over non-linear nodes of land as opposed to large swathes of continuous areas. Thus, Gulf states do not always respect modern boundaries and may view them as political, divisive, and an ongoing source of contestation. Modern political economic concerns and requirements for the legal division of hydrocarbons according to clearly demarcated borders are thus incomensurable with traditional Gulf claims to land and resources.

Richard Schofield is widely recognized as a leading academic authority on the international boundaries of Arabia and its surrounding region. He has written extensively on territorial aspects of Arabia and the Persian Gulf region, and has acted as adviser on territorial disputes to the governments of Barbados, Bahrain, Jordan, Yemen, as well as to the Negotiations Support Unit of the Palestine Liberation Organization in Ramallah.
I define myself as an activist researcher, two terms that seemingly contradict. As a sociolinguist, I collect and analyze life stories. As an activist, I select the life stories of those who live in the periphery of our societies, those who have been deemed outcasts either because of their actions against society or against themselves. In a forthcoming article on narrative criminology I state that “examining oral life stories of prisoners and drug addicts in treatment centers, I have been most aware that the events mentioned are sequenced by someone for others, presenting a self for the interviewer, but also making a presentation of the self for the speaker him or herself in what I term ‘telling moments.’” Such moments contain “hot spots” composed of a speaker’s choices in ways of telling. Thus, in the interview narratives I have collected, I locate the presentation of the self through the way the speaker presents actions in his or her past. I suggest such “working” of the life stories signals the re-shaping of the self and holds out possibilities for community renewal in the wake of crime and violation.

Thus, when I audiotape a life story and analyze it, I seek out the moments where the speaker shows herself or himself at junctures of contemplation about her or his life. Consider the example from my manuscript in progress Mending Ways With Words in which the eighteen-year-old African American woman I give the pseudonym Serena recounts her life story in the fast life of addiction. She has earlier revealed that her father had “sexually, physically, and emotionally abused her.” She tells that she has smoked marijuana and PCP from the age of sixteen, became a crack addict by the age of sixteen, had an abortion, became pregnant again, and entered the recovery center at age of seventeen after her “last run,” as Serena called it.

In the small excerpt below, we will pay attention not only to the detailed description that Serena gives, but also to her moments of introspection and commentary, what narratologist Micke Bal calls a perceptible narrator’s role. One key aspect of Serena’s series of vignettes is their lack of deep reflexivity: The act of telling, however, constitutes one macro reflexive act. This account, then, gives us a view into the fast life of a young addict inside an early time-frame of use and from a “short” distance vis-à-vis a look back on one’s life. Clear, however, in the narrative data are self concepts concerning school and work identities and “playing by the rules,” even in the midst of illegal activity.

Serena: Um, when I started smoking crack I was a stripper. So I was making, I was making fast money—I had been dropped out of school at this point.
POC: mmhhmm.
Serena: Um . . .
POC: How’d you get involved in stripping?
Serena: Through Paul. Paul hooked me up with his cousin, his cousin owned a strip joint—his cousin was the police. His cousin owned the strip joint, and I um, was dancing in there. He didn’t know how old I was or nothing. I ain’t tricking the club, or nothing either. I mean I would trick, but not in the club, I’d pay the exiting fee, to leave, go

Above, Serena focalizes on her life and determines her identity through her work as a stripper in a nightclub. Her verb choices are active, agentive, and a mix of verbs suggesting customary aspect (would trick, I’d pay), unlike the passage about school identity in which she stated passively she “had been dropped out of school.” At age fifteen, she sees herself as a stripper, using the terminology of “tricking” to describe her other money-making activities outside the club. She clearly notes that she has not violated the rules of the strip club; a club ironically owned by a police officer whom she has met through her drug connection Paul. Serena does not label police ownership as unusual and seems most concerned to be playing by the rules, though the policeman and his cousin are hardly doing so. She takes her “tricking” business outside the club, even paying “exit fees,” as is customary for the strippers. Her mini narrative stresses her ability to make money dancing and by cleverly “mak[ing] the trick pay me more.” These aspects add to her sense of her cunning begun by concealing her age since the policeman owner “did not know how old I was or nothing.”

The chief aspects of identity here appear to be Serena’s clever ability to act both as a stripper and a productive moneymaker, all in spite of her youth. The fast money is juxtaposed with the crack smoking, using a blank or ellipsis as the place holder for cause and effect from need for drugs, to getting money to support the habit. Significant as a means of therapeutic strength however is noting her desire to play by the rules. This discourse analysis could assist a therapist to appeal to Serena’s rule-keeping as a means on which to build compliance in treatment. On the negative side, a therapist might also note her ability to conceal and deceive, attributes that assist the addict in getting the drug, but which, in recovery, may lead to less than full honesty and a return to dangerous behavior. Thus, the passage merits exploration if Serena is to come to grips with a re-shaping of her life, built on turning negative patterns into positive ones.

This small bit of data shows the dangerous and devious world of addicts, but also illuminates the “telling moments” where therapeutic intervention might begin. I suggest that knowledge we gain in addressing “lost lives” through research of those who live in the criminal periphery is one way to renew our communities.

You may ask why does an English professor busy herself with researching the lives of prisoners and drug addicts. Narrative underpins all my work whether it be teaching literature, helping students craft composition, or researching into marginalized lives. I agree with cognitive scientist Jerome Bruner that narrative is one of the chief ways of knowing (along with logico-scientific reasoning). We are raised into story, the narrative of our lives, our families, our cultures, and our society. We negotiate the world through how we see ourselves in the story of who we have been, who we are, and who we want to become. In such narrative spaces, I focus my energies for community renewal in the face of seemingly growing chaos.
Post-modern cinema, as exemplified in Iranian art-house cinema, has also gained both local and global recognition. While a state ban on cinema does not exist in contemporary Iran, distribution and screening of films is usually done in private spaces, abroad, or on the internet. In the midst of a highly securitized international mainstream media debate on the Islamic Republic, the simple and humanist content of Iranian films has enabled art-house cinema to provide social and cultural insight on contemporary Iran.

The ramifications of political relations between the United States and Iran on the experiences of Iranian immigrants in the U.S. were also tackled during the meeting. Due to the hostile political environment that followed the Iran hostage crisis, first generation Iranian immigrants in the U.S. faced difficulty in assimilating and participating in American politics. Second generation Iranians, however, have carved out a new identity that binds their Iranian heritage and roots with an American civic identity. Increasingly, the Iranian diaspora and American-Iranians in particular are serving as cultural conduits between Iran and the U.S., affecting developments both in the home and host states.

The transition of the Iranian family into a modern pro-growth family mirrors the transformation of Iran's economic landscape from a government-run war economy to a diverse growth economy. Within this larger phenomenon, the scholars discussed the role of corporate Iran. Key factors such as privatization, subsidy reform and the imposition of external sanctions have shaped the corporate sector. While the privatization process has meant that the government no longer plays the dominating role in corporate Iran, the beneficiaries of these processes have mainly been semi-state institutions and individuals with access to government networks and assets. Within Iran, the independent private sector has become more commercially oriented, is providing the majority of employment opportunities in the job market, and is exhibiting increased professionalism. However, the presence of parastatal institutions limits Iran's competitive environment. In the first decade of the revolution, quasi-governmental organizations such as the bonyads were political entities responsible for charitable dispensation to lower class constituencies which accordingly allowed them to mobilize support for the regime. The post-Khomeini era, however, has brought about the evolution of the bonyads into robust political and economic entities that act as parallel institutions to the state. Their transition into profitable enterprises that account for a third of Iran's economy, has stifled competition, and has increasingly crowded out the independent private sector.

At the culmination of this research initiative, the various topics and chapters submitted by the contributors will be compiled into a comprehensive edited volume on contemporary Iranian society.
as well. What is termed “dual-use technology” includes a whole spectrum of technological goods that are integral to the enhancement of military capabilities and, yet, are also essential for basic civilian industries. Civilian air travel is one such example where lack of essential materials means that passenger carriers have steadily deteriorated over the decades and cannot be refurbished. Further, humanitarian items, such as medicines, are exempt from the sanctions regime, and, yet, because of the strict limitations on the banking system, it is difficult to conduct any kind of financial transaction to attain them.

Quoting from a recent Gallop Poll Kamrava reported that most Iranians answered that they were personally affected by sanctions. Although most agreed that the nuclear program was the main reason for the imposition of sanctions, they blamed the United States for their personal suffering. Thus, “the sanctions are actually having the opposite effect, as compared to what the United States intended,” he explained.

Kamrava ended by drawing four broad conclusions, including: “sanctions have become the favored U.S. instrument of pressure;” “there is a self-perception of suffering among the Iranian people;” “there is a high level of support for the nuclear program;” and, finally, “the U.S. is getting largely the blame for the Iranian predicament on the part of the Iranian people.”

“Sanctions are actually having the opposite effect, as compared to what the United States intended.”

Manata Hashemi gave the second presentation in which she analyzed how Iran’s social and economic landscapes have been severely affected by U.S. and EU sanctions, leading to a decline in the value of the rial and a sharp increase in the price of daily goods. “It is not just imported goods that have seen a price increase, the price of goods that are produced locally have also increased as some merchants use the slide in the rial as an excuse to raise prices,” she explained. Iranian output has seen a decline because of the restrictive measures, which has, in turn, led to a slash in jobs and an increase in unemployment.

However, contrary to international media discourses regarding the extreme suffering of ordinary Iranians in their daily lives, Hashemi explained how people—especially those in the lower echelons of society—are coping with, and navigating around, these restrictions. “We know that the sanctions have certainly bitten; they brought inflation and a collapse in the currency; they have harmed many economic prospects for ordinary people, and, not surprisingly, they solidified general sentiment against the West,” she argued. However, government organizations have developed campaigns in which handouts have been distributed to those most in need. In conjunction with these official measures, “non-governmental organizations have also contributed to mitigating the effects of sanctions by distributing non-cash material goods like clothes, school supplies, and other essentials to the poorest,” Hashemi said.

“The sanctions have certainly bitten; they brought inflation and a collapse in the currency.”

People in the lower and middle echelons of society get actively involved in bettering their own lives through creative measures in order to soften the impact of the sanctions. Iranians have become more conscious of their spending habits and have transformed their shopping practices by purchasing locally produced goods that have were shunned as a sign of inferior quality and low social status. Other measures include taking on extra jobs—often in the informal market—or taking part in reciprocal exchange networks. Hashemi said that “by allowing youths access to material possessions, not only do these types of clothing exchange networks help them keep personal expenses to a minimum, but, more importantly, they serve as a way for them to save face and to keep up their reputation among their peers.”

Hashemi ended by saying that people in Iran are not just finding ways to survive, but are striving for “the good life” and for a dignified life that is full of aspirations.

Manooz Moaddel ended the discussion by highlighting two major challenges to the Islamic Republic that “are capable of transforming the Islamic regime and contributing to the rise of moderate and democratic politics in Iran. The first is the international community’s steadfast posture against the Islamic Republic’s nuclear policy and the second is a growing opposition movement within the country that is calling for liberal values and democratic governance. The irony, Moaddel said, is that the comprehensive sanctions have had more of a detrimental effect on democratic forces than it has on undermining the regime and its capabilities. Effectively, the “sanctions have undermined the private sector and the middle class, while enhancing the power of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards,” he explained.

Citing results of two polls conducted in Iran in 2000 and 2005, Moaddel said that there has been a major shift in the sentiments of ordinary Iranians towards liberal and nationalist values that stand in stark opposition to that of the ruling Islamic regime. Currently, a large percentage of Iranians value nationalism above religion as the basis for their identity. Moaddel argued that the international community’s lack of support for these new liberal attitudes is a missed opportunity.

Alternative “smart” sanctions could be pursued. Moaddel pointed out that not all interest groups in the U.S. agree that sanctions are the best way of achieving objectives. While the Israeli lobby is keen on imposing ever more crippling sanctions, many U.S. corporations are against them and more in favor of continuing trade relations with Iran. Moaddel argued that “effective sanctions, in my view, are ‘smart sanctions’—those that effectively undermine the repressive capability of the regime, including the revolutionary guards, while enhancing the power of the democratic opposition.”

“Effective sanctions, in my view, are ‘smart sanctions.’”

Western governments cannot see beyond their fears of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction; they should instead encourage the mobilization of the Iranian population towards calls for democratization. Moaddel concluded that “the current crippling sanctions may in fact undermine the regime. They may at the same time destroy the organizations of the civil society and undermine the morale of the oppositions. Smart sanctions are good. Current crippling sanctions that are comprehensive and universal, which adversely affect the lives of all Iranians, are simply war by other means.”
CIRS held a working group to research “Politics and the Media in the Post-Arab Spring Middle East” on January 5-6, 2013. Given the profound sociopolitical transitions within Arab states in the wake of the Arab Spring, participants used a multidisciplinary approach to analyze shifts in the role of the media, and how it is articulated in everyday spaces of cultural production within the region.

With the rise of new media and its increasing integration within traditional media, participants discussed how media is positioned in the new political scene. Evolving ruling bargains in the region have been translated into evolving information bargains where distinctions between processes of information production and reception have become increasingly blurred. The notion of the public becoming an active participant in media processes translates into a society that is becoming self-informed. This is evident in countries such as Saudi Arabia, where people have bypassed state operations and sidelined leaders by taking media tools such as Twitter into their own hands in a move from centralization to decentralization of information.

The media landscape in countries that successfully toppled their dictators exhibits elements of both continuity and change, as countries such as Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, and Yemen are in the process of re-articulating the position of the state in relation to society. Remnants of authoritarianism continue to impact Egypt where state media institutions are perceived as being “ikhwaniized,” while signs of political liberalization are emerging in neighboring Libya, where media practitioners are allowed to more freely criticize political leadership.

In addition to understanding the changing political dynamics of the region, the media landscape gives insight on the current sociopolitical forces at play. With the rise of Islamist parties, the secular-Islamist divide has dominated much of the discourse. However, closer analysis of Islamic television in the region provides a more nuanced understanding of the different Islamic movements gaining ascendancy. Participants discussed the *Da’wa* (Islamic outreach) movement as a field that is internally divided and diverse. Islamic channels are not the alternative to secular channels as commonly misconceived, rather Islamic television as a social practice addresses moral notions of citizenship by providing competing forms of Muslim identity.

As with most prolonged political upheavals, Arab transitional media is offering mobilizing information, and is increasingly being used as a platform for voicing opinions. Historically, Arab journalists have viewed themselves as agents of social change; more than just purveyors of information, they are interpreters of public life.

While discussing whether there is an Arab journalism culture that can be attributed to the region as a whole, the participants advocated for a de-westernization of media studies that assesses the intricate micro-processes evident in Arab journalism, and studies how people negotiate their subjectivity within broader sociopolitical constraints.

The participants also discussed the “multi-vocality” present in the media in terms of language, cultural spaces of production, and social actors. Arab graffiti, regarded as a visible form of politics, has become popular in the region, yet remains greatly understudied. Going beyond the content of “visible politics” and understanding the style and aesthetics of graffiti gives greater understanding of the language utilized to resonate with people's interests, grievances, and needs. Other forms of production, such as *musalsals* (serialized television shows), were discussed as avenues for understanding the sociopolitical phenomena of the revolutions.

Various social movements have a myriad of players that utilize media tools as instruments of activism and adapt them to their respective needs. Social media has enabled diasporic communities to organize, mobilize, and contribute to issues playing out in their homelands. Wary of the misconception that social media is all inclusive, participants pointed to the class-based accessibility of the internet and social media sites. Notions of inclusion and exclusion led participants to question what media spaces marginalized communities use to speak and who their audience is.

In the wake of the Arab revolts, Hezbollah has become an increasingly controversial player. Although the popular uprisings did not occur in Lebanon as they did in other Arab countries, the political mosaic of Lebanon reflects the politics of the region, and understanding the media strategies of Hezbollah gives insight into how people interact with the media as sectarian sensibilities in the region are heightened. While Hezbollah is a Shi’a organization, its affiliated television station, Al-Manar, avoids sectarian rhetoric, portraying itself as pan-Islamist and pan-Arabist and boasts of a wide variety of audiences coming from different sectarian affiliations.

In tackling the political economy of media in the Middle East, the participants questioned whether state policies are directly reflected in the strategies and content of state-owned or state-sponsored media outlets. The range of actors involved in media production, from directors and producers to journalists in the newsroom, merits a distinction between funders and creators of media forms. Media cities were also discussed as useful sites of cultural production where structures of power and norms of resistance can be understood. An example of such is the strict control of the Egyptian Media Production City by the ruling Muslim Brotherhood, where a supposed beacon of media freedom is dominated by the ruling political party.

Over the past decade, there has been growing localization of news providers in the Arab world as people become increasingly concerned with issues pertaining to their daily lives. In what is dubbed the “post Al-Jazeera era,” participants discussed what this means for U.S. public diplomacy in the region. The failure of Al-Hurra to operate as an effective foreign policy tool for the U.S. government begs the question: what media tools and mechanisms will the U.S. government utilize in the face of increasing competition from local Arab news providers? As media becomes increasingly dispersed, social actors and governments alike will alter their communication strategies to accommodate the shifting Arab media landscape.
Maha Al-Hendawi, the inaugural CIRS Qatar University Fellow for 2012-2013 and Assistant Professor of Special Education in the College of Education at Qatar University, delivered a CIRS Focused Discussion on “Policy Borrowing in Education: the Example of Inclusive Education in the Gulf” on February 19, 2013. Al-Hendawi began the lecture by noting that her interest in the topic came from her own experience as a graduate from a U.S. university who returned to Qatar thinking that she would implement some of the policies and procedures she had learnt and experience whilst studying abroad.

Al-Hendawi explained that she was initially enthusiastic about introducing certain US-based policies upon her return to Qatar. However, the reality on the ground proved otherwise, and she began experiencing a fundamental problem with “policy borrowing.” Al-Hendawi’s direct involvement with local schools, as well as with the Supreme Education Council, gave her a greater insight into the specific challenges of the local educational environment that policy borrowing might not be able to solve, and that may even lead to a whole set of new and unforeseen challenges. Al-Hendawi noticed that certain policies were not as successful in Qatar as they were in the United States. She is currently working on investigating why these challenges exist and what she could do to help formulate future policy directions. Al-Hendawi said, “I basically chose one of the most important policies in Special Education, if not the most important policy in Special Education, that is, ‘inclusive education,’” as a case study, which followed the research path set by renowned scholars in the field.

“The main reasons for borrowing policy, or borrowing the policy of inclusive education, are globalization and international pressure.”

The general definition of “inclusive education” is when students with disabilities are included within the general education system and given access to a general education curriculum. There are many different approaches to inclusive education worldwide, where some models advise that only students with mild disabilities can be included. UNESCO, however, advocates for “full inclusion” and an open school system where any student with disabilities, no matter the degree, is able to access the general school system. This lack of consensus on what constitutes “inclusive education” presents a number of challenges, she said. For example, the Qatari school system adopted both modified inclusion and full inclusion at different times, and with different results.

“The main reasons for borrowing policy, or borrowing the policy of inclusive education, are globalization and international pressure,” Al-Hendawi argued. It is important to place policy borrowing in its proper context. “Here in the Gulf, when the policy of inclusive education came, it came with education reform,” and a reorganization of the entire school system and curriculum. Al-Hendawi argued that “timing is really important, because it actually came post-9/11,” when the West began questioning the Arab educational system in general, and became directly involved in its overhaul. This was a highly contentious issue that was vigorously debated in local media outlets all over the Gulf.

“When the policy of inclusion started in the West, it came out of the human rights movements, and it came out of the ideology of social justice, equity, equality, so it was actually a bottom-top type of decision” that grew organically out of public demands. In the Gulf states, however, these policy decisions are being imposed from the top-down. In this regard, even though the policies are commendable and show results in their countries of origin, they have not had enough time to filter through the social structures of Gulf countries.

In conclusion, Al-Hendawi warned that policy borrowing is a problem when it is implemented as a “quick fix” to address an immediate issue. This is further exacerbated when policies do not take into account the specific social, cultural, and political environments that may not always be compatible with the implementation and aims of the policy. In short, careful and constructive policy borrowing must be implemented in a way that takes into account local contexts in order for it to become internalized by the adoptive country.

Maha Al-Hendawi received her Ph.D. in Special Education and Disability Leadership from Virginia Commonwealth University. Her research interests include educational policies and reform initiatives in the region; academic interventions for children and youth with special needs and those who are at-risk; and quality preparation and training programs for educators. She has published in the area of special education and has been a guest speaker at various events and activities.

In order to enhance local research productivity and to build upon its established collegial relationship with Qatar University, CIRS launched an annual fellowship to be awarded to a member of Qatar University’s faculty. Maha Al-Hendawi was selected as the 2012-2013 CIRS QU fellow. The fellowship will support Al-Hendawi in pursuing original research projects, with the aim of publishing research outcomes.
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The Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS) at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar (SFS-Q) is pleased to announce a call for contributions to its publication series. CIRS publishes original research in a broad range of issues related to the Gulf region in the areas of international relations, political science, economics, and Islamic studies. Other topics of current significance will also be considered.

Papers should be a maximum of 10,000 words and cannot have been previously published elsewhere. Papers must adhere to the Chicago Manual of Style (16th edition) and all transliterations must adhere to the International Journal of Middle East Studies. All submissions are subject to a double-blind review process. Any copyright concerns are the full responsibility of the author. Please submit manuscripts to cirresearch@georgetown.edu.

Inquiries about publications or other related questions may be directed to Suzi Mirgani, Manager and Editor for CIRS Publications at sm623@georgetown.edu.

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